

State Board of Education

Omaha Forum

The High School Experience

3/25/2004

State Board of Education

Omaha Forum – The High School Experience

3/25/2004

Table 16

Key Points in our discussion:

- Time (schedule, number of years, location of services, etc.) and schooling must be flexible.
- All schools must involve meaningful, engaging curriculum and activities, often related to real-world needs and individual student abilities.
- All students should be held to high standards, perhaps measured by competency tests or other demonstrations.
- The conservative political agenda must be defeated in order to address the REAL issues of poverty and inequity.

What should a high school diploma mean?

The student has met the established standards.

The student is prepared to go on to the next step.

The student is able to write, spell, read, and meet basic requirements.

The student is able to do college work, and has a minimum level of competency.

It should be noted that more students continue in high schools than in the past, so we may have more students who struggle with standards.

The student should have the ability to compete at the next level.

The standards for high school students to meet should be raised. Graduating with all D's should not be enough.

The high school diploma is part of accountability to the public.

High school diploma is too generic; it doesn't tell me much. We're trying to serve so many needs.

Sometimes we pretend that student meet requirements that they don't meet.

Perhaps diplomas could be changed to indicate that you write well, speak well.

Some in the public don't believe that high school graduates have basic skills, i.e. cannot write a complete sentence.

Perhaps a final test should be required.

What should be done to make the high school experience more meaningful to all students?

Give opportunities to students to take longer or to take less time than 4 years. School requirements could be to meet needs of students.

Provide more flexibility; structure differently.

Do real-world activities. Make schooling more relevant. Academies in high schools do this well, but they are only available to some students, generally in 11th and 12th grade years.

Students should be required to take a class (or test out) to develop basic skills.

Senior year should let students “fly.”

Setting up “outcomes” that students must meet might be a good plan (i.e. Ralston High School.)

High schools today...(What’s working? What’s not working? What changes should be made?)

How do we keep all students engaged in the high school experience?

Flexibility is a key. Many seniors are eager to just get out.

Some students work harder at part time jobs (with responsibility!) than they do at school.

Some students are bored at school.

Have time requirements that vary as to need.

Change science classes “order” to physics, chemistry, and then biology. Makes more sense. (Original decision of order may have been alphabetical)

Poverty is our problem. We need the general population to care enough to make a difference. A conservative political agenda is the real problem.

Providing incentives to students might help.

Schooling must include a caring community, an engaging curriculum, and student choice (Alfie Kohn).

Students must be interested in school and must know that adults are interested in them.

Perhaps out-the-school senior projects would help some students succeed.

Academics should involve more students.

How do we prepare students to transition successfully?

Teach students problem solving, communication skills, team-work skills, and leadership skills.

Table top consensus:

What is one thing you’d like to have in our final points?

Structure the high school differently so that we’re not locked into traditional schedules.

Structure the high school differently so that we’re not locked into traditional schedules.

(Repeated by a second member)

Institute competency tests.

Be more flexible for each student; focus on skills rather than on time.

Help each student go as far as he/she can; push each student.

Competency tests should be required. Students need to be pushed.

We need to go slower with the lower third of students, encouraging them.

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Key Points in our discussion:

- Curriculum revision that includes integrating curriculum, hands-on and practical application and meets the different learning styles. Emphasis on “meaningful education.”
 - Provide opportunities for planning and collaboration between staff.
 - Explore more creative relationships between business, secondary education and post-secondary institutions.
 - Prepare students to become life-long learners.
 - Offer graduated levels of diplomas allowing students to have adequate preparation for various careers that fit the various levels of learners.
 - Allow more flexibility in terms of required assessment.
-
- Block Scheduling at North - easier to get work done – you have two days to get homework done. If you have problems with the material before a test, you have time to seek out the teacher to answer questions before a test.
 - Academic Rigor – AP and College level classes – good preparation for college, teachers also teach at college level.
 - Best students are as well educated as they have ever been. Bottom third were dropouts in history. Bottom third are staying in high school – what is the reason – is that a good thing or a bad thing.
 - Upper students will learn in spite of having a poor teacher, the poorer students will not.
 - Current situation does not work for all three groups. I.e. consumer math example – math is not out there for practical applications – no textbooks even exist. Fair is not equal and equal is not the same. Trying to make it so generic that no one will feel left out.
 - NCLB – can’t teach what they need, but what it takes to pass the test.

- Kids don't feel like they belong or education is for them
- Issues today are so different – it isn't that we have forgotten to teach to the bottom third, but we haven't had to teach the bottom third. Family situations are an issue too. Kids go to school until 16 and then get out. If parents don't support you, they don't feel that education doesn't matter.
- Teachers can't sell the issue for students with socio-economic issues – that education will give them the leg up.
- Some of the parent's don't have the parenting skills or resources to provide the right environment for the student's to learn at home. Parents are laborers that don't bring homework – the kids don't see that example.
- Teachers so left behind NCLB. We're the only nation that gives one test for all of this. Other nations don't test all of the students like we do. There is an 8th grade test and they branch off and are never compared.
- As long as the nation has the mentality that every student should compete. We should be looking levels of testing based on their needs and what they will use, not like they need for Shakespeare.
- **Class size** – limits the type of teaching methodologies that you can use. Does allow for mentoring. In Japan, they teach until 1 p.m. and then have dept. meetings to plan the lessons for the next day. No time for collaboration.
- Parent's attitude that their child can't do anything wrong. They don't want the school deciding the discipline.
- Eight semesters of academic learning – closer to really 6 semesters – attitudes are awful at the end. Needs to be more rigorous.
- Dual credits – increase requirements
- What is a diploma – different levels? Metro is kind of a “step child” – look at the system in Kansas. More partnerships – articulation – get out early and go to places like Metro.
- Trinidad CO – have a high school diploma in 5 years. Need to be more creative to reach those students.
- High School student – if you had a choice what classes would you take. Honors classes make a difference on whether or not a lot of kids will take it. I.e. band vs. gym
- Get over the kids being in school 8 periods a day – 14 and 15 years old better off doing more active things – get away from everyone doing the same thing
- Integrating curriculum – i.e. Millard North class - Journey to the Red Planet. Engage the students -- they may not take it because it means some students won't take it because it doesn't fit the box. The box needs to change.
- Teach practical applications they can use in life through the courses.
- Kids don't learn the same – they don't seek the connection through their courses. Lots of the literature books do not interest the students. Forces them to read – turns them off to reading. Kids need more hands on. Let the students choose what they want to read. Let the student's do things that interest them instead of forcing them. Ex. Choose something that interests you – then end up writing a paper on that topic that is controversial about it – present to the class – other kids learn about it.
- Lower level needs engagement and more hands on to get it. Include mentors as a part of it.
- Study halls are worthless. Integrate mentoring there where they can feel comfortable asking for help.

- Need more experiential learning.
- Need to see the reasons why they need to study what they are required to.
- College prep – what you need to have to go to a four-year college. Maybe they don't want to go to school for four years or can't afford to. Our counselor's need to do more about what college opportunities there are not just what you need (they believe) is needed for the four year experience
- On-site after school programs for younger kids. High school kids do more by working with elementary students. Develop creative activities to mentor with younger kids. Partner with business and higher ed. Gives the high school kids the chance to feel good about what they are doing – they get to be the smart one.
- Service learning – they do it because they have to do it – instead of having a beneficial experience. It needs to be done better. So are not just babysitting.
- Accountability is good, but levels need to change. People forcing the testing, don't understand what needs to be tested. Understand the concepts, but can't pass a standardized test.
- Teach them like a jazz musician – don't expect they will always be taught with the music – teach the technique of the instrument -- teach improve
- Standardized test – ACT discussed the bias of the test – guys have a better chance because of the way it is worded. Don't take the AP test because they want to learn it better in college – avoid it because of the essay – why waste \$80 on a test you won't pass.
- How do we make it more meaningful - isn't it interesting that college is listed first? Increased earning potential grows as additional education is completed. We still have to teach for the college experience. We are doing that well for the top third – we don't consider that not everyone wants to go to college.
- Career preparation – has changed a lot - are the careers of tomorrow – college prep and career prep should go hand in hand – teach them earlier how to determine a career direction – also need to prepare them to deal with change and retraining.
- Education is never over. Listen to kids to what they need in high school.
- Job shadowing at an earlier level to help the kids determine career options.
- Transition – shadowing can help.
- High schools and colleges need to communicate to establish course requirements and help students be successful. I.e. why do they force the kids to have 2 years of foreign language when they can't pass it – but counselors get criticized for not encouraging the selection of courses based on college entrance. The high schools also need to communicate between districts.
- Testing is an issue – i.e. testing without notes. In the real world you have references or materials to look it up. Teaching how to find solutions is as important.
- Should a diploma mean the same thing – what would the employer really want it to mean.
- ACT scores – some kids rank high in the class, but score poorly because they don't test well – there is nothing on the ACT to measure other subject areas that may have career focus. What is offered at some schools actually hurt the student on preparing them for taking the ACT. Test anxiety is a major issue when there is so much pressure on a test.

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Table 18

Key Points in our discussion:

- **Limit the first year of high school (9th grade) to small classes with more individualized contacts.**
- **Develop positive relationships between students and adults.**
- **High schools are more important now than ever before. High schools need to be more adaptive in teaching, and in our structure than we have been in the past.**

What should a high school diploma mean?

What should be done to make the high school experience more meaningful to all students?

How do we keep all students engaged in the high school experience?

How do we prepare students to transition successfully?

- Almost every job requires some on the job training. Most companies expect to train employees on what they will need to know. Life on learning will be important.
- Application and manipulating information will be more important than memorizing information.
- That a student can read & write, sit quietly, take direction.
- Use to mean more doors are open to you...but now
- Students have completed a certain number of credits in core subjects (math, science, social studies, English). Tests are not always tied to a diploma. At least a set of basic skills in those areas.
- May mean no more than a student attended. Different populations of students will possess various levels of mastery.
- Mass individualization of education. Delivering to the masses. Each being given differentiated instruction.
- Connect bottom 1/3 to an adult that can make a positive connection. Many of the lower 1/3 lack some of the basic social skills needed to be successful in the work place.

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Table 19

Key Points in our discussion:

- Diplomas should represent the student record of accomplishments – right now they all look the same.
- Personalized goals, plans based on individual student needs.
- Relationships of quality: Student/Teacher/Parent
- Community engagement and support to provide contextualized learning. Learning opportunities for the community within the school
- Break down the walls within the school – collaboration between teachers and integration of the content

- Limit the first year of high school to small classes with more individualized contacts.
- Hard to get students with low skills to acknowledge their level. Adding reading courses to the high school to improve skills.
- Question whether we really have a 1/3, 1/3, 1/3 grouping of students. Maybe it's more 10% top, 30 % middle, and 60% low. We have a large number of students who are not "getting it" even though they look like they are. We have students who are graduating who are lacking basic skills, and if this is true, then what about those who do not graduate, but drop out?
- We need to provide students with the skills necessary to survive. We may even have a population of 50/50. Half of the students are receiving an A/B and the rest are receiving a D/F.
- Creating a school within a school model.
- Society may expect too much from education. Many of the issues are beyond the scope of the education system.
- Dual enrollment opportunities. Upward Bound, Talent Search....these kinds of programs help to make the connection to college. College is often a foreign idea to many students.
- Bellevue is working at establishing a dual enrollment program to help low income students achieve their educational goals. Tech prep at Metro is also filling a niche.
- We talk too much about college, as if every student would benefit from it. Some will benefit more from internships or apprenticeships. Vocational courses can be the best thing for some kinds. Sometimes two year programs can prepare students for the world of work
- Many students are in the service industry, but many of them do not provide health benefits.

What is working in our high schools?

- We are educating better. Over time students learn more, and do get smarter. It is working for some, but not for all.
- Standards-based education has given us more focus, and has guaranteed that all students are learning similar outcomes.

Content is important, but relationships are also important. Changes need to be made to match teachers with students so that relationships can form.

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Key Points in Discussion:

- **Personalized**—create a sense of belonging through high interest options of engagement *that bridges the school and the community* through projects, service learning, internships, career-based experiences—personalized also for parents and families
- **Standards based** that is consistent throughout the state with similar outcomes and assessment measures that have *relevance and application* which is also “learner focused” (NO Carnegie Units)
- **Technologically relevant** to provide a foundation for students in the 21st century not the 20th century—*flexible and virtual* through the tools of today’s technology
- **Transition oriented** from adolescence to adulthood which has a foundation in *career and educational planning* that supports the goals, needs and desires of the “developing adult”
- **24/7** with lot’s of options and opportunities—*not bound by walls or tradition or athletics but embracing of the community*

Time management—use time productively—no study hall

Technology literacy is a fundamental “must”

HS Diploma

Competencies—subject matter—workplace such as communication, social skills, life skills, and technology literacy—align with 21st century

Self management, analytical skills

It needs to be more than a “set” of courses

We need to make the experience a meaningful exchange

Students need choice and flexibility

Relevance—why are we studying what we are?

Current structure (time) is too rigid to often meet needs of students with disabilities—promotes the concept of “failure”

We need to move away from the “one size fits all” mentality of most high school structures—move away from “fitting everyone in the box”

Move into “ungraded” concepts

Teacher training needs to change

We need to provide to a focus on the relationship of career and educational planning

The system must look at needs of “all students” too much of a focus on “college prep” not enough of a focus on the wide array of post high school choices and the needs to prepare for any of those post high school choices—the preparation for choices and options differ—

Need to take into account the diversity in our state and provide opportunities that “enhance” diversity—race, culture, language, gender, and disabilities

What's Working?

Trying to provide a lot of options & choices

Assessment & portfolio concept

Standards based approach is working—Carnegie units do not

On-line learning in a standards approach

Flexible time—late starts in the morning—structure to meet the optimal learning time for the individual—morning, afternoon or night

Revamping high school education that is really creative—may be 24/7

Engagement

What is the “hook” to stay in—build on the talent and the sense of belonging—clubs—programs of high interest (CTE-Art-Music)

Personal relationships with the students—team teaching or team concept at the high school level—must create the individual education

Advisory groups that really make a difference and spend time with students---each teacher being responsible for the “whole educational experience” for the child

Must break the school into a smaller unit----

Organization

Kids have to be engaged must divide into smaller groups---with a specific focus—not just a random assignment

Teacher makes the difference in making the personal connection—knows the students by name—complementary—every student every day

Learner centered

Technology focused—highly interactive

Must address how to give every student and every teacher the tools that are needed to make it happen

Distance learning is where it is at for out students of tomorrow

Transition

Build your high school as an “adult” learning community—include the community in the utilization of the facilities 24/7

Continue to listen to the business community

Use the special education model of transition for all students—all children need a “career and educational plan” developed during the middle school

Goal is NOT HS diploma—it is to create life long learners and to prepare students for the transition into adulthood —their adulthood—the world of the 21st century NOT the 20th century

Look a funding that is combined—HS funding and adult literacy

Require internships, service learning—the diploma needs to be more than grades—a portfolio that is project oriented and academic focus that is standards based

Soft skills---d

Susan's Box

Expect too much or too little—stuck in the middle

Agreed upon outcomes for public education

When the outcomes are achieved the student earns the “high school diploma” or crown—no age limits of when you get in or when you get out

Once the foundation is achieved—we start to “contract” for those next steps

No inter-school athletics!!!!!!

We focus on how to make choices

~~The how-tos are determined by the educators~~

At a minimum change the sequence of science into a logical developmentally appropriate process

School finance—bonus system based on success—compensation for “engaged” students

Schools still put too much emphasis on “content” not on demonstrate the application of the concepts

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Table 21

HOW DO WE MAKE THE HIGH SCHOOL EXPERIENCE WORK FOR *ALL* OF OUR STUDENTS?

Key Points in our discussion:

- Nebraska high school looks like:

- **Competency-based** grading



- **Integrated & interdisciplinary** learning... thematic learning (≈ “majors”...allow students to learn about THEMSELVES while building skills & knowledge)



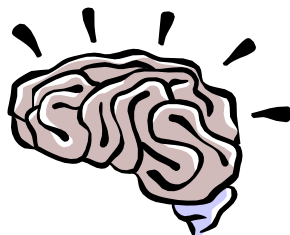
- **Flexible** career pathways & clusters



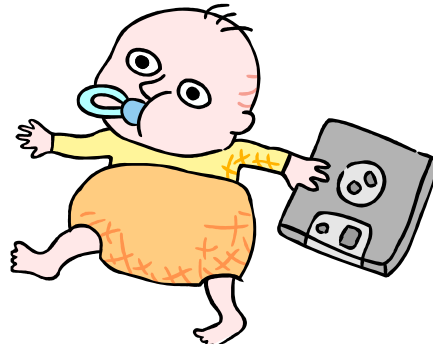
- Personalization of the learning experience...student-ownership of her/his own learning



- Open teachers' minds to **different learning styles** via selection of staff, staff development & training



- Teachers recruit **and engage students** & promote-initiated learning
- Life-long learning exhibited through continuity and **partnership** of ALL institutions (schools, communities, families, higher education, etc.)



❖ Meaning of high school diploma

- immigrant communities and other numbers...demographics....questions about the numbers of people who do/do not have diplomas
- cultural sub-groups where high school diploma is not as meaningful b/c short-term needs (goals?) such as \$/income
- be careful about broad generalizations
- skills of in-coming students (vocational?) are being overlooked...think about how AYP goals do NOT measure
- we are not capitalizing on the in-coming skills of our students
- obsession about 4-year “liberal arts” degree...redefine as POST-SECONDARY learning opportunity
- so....what should a diploma MEAN?
- Knowledge...skills...both?
- What kinds of skills? Problem-solving or critical thinking or retaining information?

- Corporate world looking for COMPETENCIES
- HAL students see diploma as a ticket to college
- A certificate of attendance...does NOT necessarily translate into college success
- Make the competencies definable...not just factoids...would eliminate the “time” factor DC talked about...DEMONSTRATE skills (authentic assessment) not just bubble-filling
- Multiple opportunities to demonstrate that competencies
- Change how students qualify for a diploma....DEMONSTRATE...ex: senior projects (similar to defend a thesis)
- Senior projects ...not all students are able to make that decision at a certain point in their lives....but DO
- allow for individuals to involve their skills & interests
- New plans...career pathways?
- Error on RIGOR’s side
- Transitions into next topic
- ❖ How to make high school experience more meaningful
 - career aspirations?
 - Senior projects?
 - “paradigms”....get out of the idea of “courses”...why? Can we break out of these “silos”....less talking and more chalking about INTERDISCIPLINARY education....making CONNECTIONS
 - our system is too old...yup...break the paradigms
 - more required courses? “A Nation at Risk”...think about how that impacted what we sometimes call “exploratory” such as FCS, art, music, etc.
 - set of courses vs. set of experiences....reflect on the relationships that we recall OURSELVES
 - DATA, not people....scary to many/most
 - Ex: International High School

- Only ELL/ESL...have to “fail” English course
- On community college campus
- High graduation rate
- 5 themes...students select 4 (ex: “The American Experience” “Crime & Punishment”)...courses use theme as springboard
- students create portfolios to demonstrate proficiencies
- students worked as teams
- all learning = given problem, team research, present solutions to the whole class
- no tracking
- competencies ...how measured?
- Personalizing...less “standardized”...ex: NYC 3-graders and other exit exams or TX students
- Setting the bar TOO high?
- Integrated thematic instruction
- PERSONAL involvement
- MEW Model then is 1-room schoolhouses combined into comprehensive high-school
- Rigor shows up in the depth of learning...not just “hard”
- Grading system and GPA-goals make students
- Other alternatives?
- Competency-based
- Rubrics
- Effort and achievement separated
- ...these encouraged students to LEARN...they are bored...jumping thru the hoops...they simply play the game
- back to 4-year plan...team support (teacher, counselor, parent, student)....then encourage students to take rigorous courses
- parents...I give you my child....all parents want more for their children...true ACROSS CULTURES
- but some cultural, linguistic barriers
- so is current system is not working for all...either they are bored (“top” students) or disengaged

- think about how bored students are
- why bored?
- Discipline issues...social interactions...
- School is a place where kids go to watch adults work.
- Social animals...but we tell them not to talk.
- One room school house
- Smaller learning communities
- Defending theses...career pathways
- Eliminate
- Student led-conferences
- Narrative grade reports
- Grades come from panels of teachers

❖ Working...not working...changes

- career educators are those who did well in the grid-system of education...not all can visualize how students who learn in DIFFERENT ways
- we know the scripts
- our calendars are so full...teachers and admin are maxed...shortage of TIME and MONEY
- teachers need time to re-think teaching methodology
- we keep adding requirements...so...now...What do we take away?
- Sports? Music? Drama? As community functions?
- Would we lose students who are there b/c of these activities?
- Society...we are at a point where we cannot possibly learn everything . This is true for ALL.
- Again...these students don't know themselves.
- Part of our job is to help them know themselves.
- Processes...not just information.

- We only have information about SpEd students...why don't we share this information? Confidentiality issues...but we need to share as educators.
- We need more time to teach! (which also means PREP)
- Testing is expensive, also.
- Assessment should really only be feedback to students.
- Conspiracy theory...testing companies are behind all of this?
- We are lucky in NE to have some leverage with NE Plan?
- Others (DC) may be starting to see that the standardized testing vs. competencies battle SHOULD be won by competencies.
- Key is changing the way we grade...but then how does stepping out of Carnegie unit box affect us prepping kids for college?
- This means living the competition to the ACT folks.
- Again...multiple assessment....colleges are looking at "big picture" anyhow.
- Standardized testing WILL show positive results when the competencies are taught and assessed.
- Lose the agrarian time schedule.
- Year-round education.
- What is working...
- Extracurricular things....works b/c of their personal involvement with an adult who gives a darn.
- Committed staff.
- Personal touches...advisor/advisee relationship.
- Access to a master in the field.
- NE teachers have NOT given up...we still care...not beaten up by standardized teaching.
- Where students are in charge of their learning...it is exciting...ex: exploratory blocks, technology...where it touches the passions of a kid.
- PERSONAL impact of one-of-one.

- Do all those who have a passion for learning have a story about a person who inspired them?
- Smaller student-to-teacher ratios...though expensive
- SLC again
- Weed out the “not capable of making connections”...they need to be out of teaching.
- We have to pay them more.
- How do they get to be teachers...what is the quality control measure for teachers?
- Documentation = time of administrators....but how many students are affected by those students?
- Does this mean giving students some weight in teacher-evaluation processes?
- Give “bad teachers” the opportunity to come back.
- Mentoring of new teachers....more time & \$, but does pay off...and supported by NE (ex: lottery \$)..also in-service time for more engaging teaching methodology
- Hard to “prove” anything....very difficult to measure...just as difficult to grade students as it is to grade teachers....issues about what is a “competencies”
- So one positive step = CHANGE HOW WE GRADE
- Aggregate teacher-driven curriculum & assessment.
- ❖ Keeping students engaged
 - (see above commentary! * grin *)
 - disconnected students...
 - more seamless connections between K to career...see the big pictures of life's pathways
 - flexibility to connect to
 - career academies....but expensive
 - help students connect to who they are and what they want to be
 - ex: UNO grant on bi-lingual paras who are also in pre-service teacher ed programs
- ❖ Successful transitions

- post-secondary and career...are not so disparate
 - dual-credit
 - career academies
 - exploratory
 - more community college prestige
 - older teachers who have experiences OUTSIDE of teaching...so have “real world” experiences
 - also sell parents on other options outside of 4-year college program
 - (non-trads...BA BS students coming back to get a skill)
- other discussions...

Should teachers have sabbaticals which give teachers a chance to explore their passions?

Epiphanies...

- Nebraska high school looks like:

- **competency-based** grading



- **integrated & interdisciplinary** learning... thematic learning (≈ “majors”...allow students to learn about THEMSELVES while building skills & knowledge)



- **flexible** career pathways & clusters

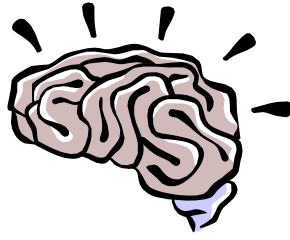


- **personalization** of the learning experience...student-ownership of her/his own learning

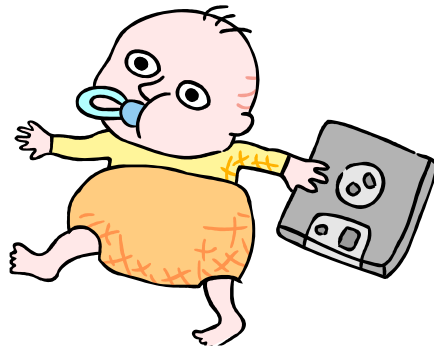


- open teachers’ minds to **different learning styles** via

selection of staff, staff development & training



- teachers recruit **and engage students** & promote-initiated learning
- life-long learning exhibited through continuity and **partnership** of ALL institutions (schools, communities, families, higher education, etc.)



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Table 22

Key Points in our discussion:

- 1. The need for a sense of being part of a learning community in school - connections with a like group of students who share many commonalities as well as branching out to a larger set of learnings in a broader aspect of the school and community.**
- 2. Sub-schools within a school as well as well structured and effective Advisement Programs within schools that will assist students in the self-assessments, career education options and acquisition of positive life skills.**
- 3. One's educational needs could be met in multiple, flexible ways where competency and proficiency are the judgment standard not just seat time or credit accumulation. We need open, flexible and moldable systems that are accessible by both requirements and affordability to provide students with decision-making options to match their life needs.**
- 4. The channeling into either a career track vs. an academic track should be dropped and every student should be thought to be career directed for their futures. All students should be thinking**

about their post-secondary plans because all will need some sort of future learning needs beyond High School.

- 5. School calendars should be places of lifelong learning for the professional staff involved in the teaching of our students. The need for time for collaboration and growth through staff development is essential to meet the needs of the ever-changing profession.**

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Table 23

Key Points in our discussion:

- Options and flexibility to meet the needs of the students
- Accountability to the individual student versus accountability to the community/system
- Resources of time, money, organization and staff. More is needed. How can the resources be reallocated to be more effective?
- Function and purpose of teachers. What counts as teaching?

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Table 24

Key Points in our discussion:

- ❖ What is working in HS today?
- ❖ Definition of HS needs to be reexamined.
- ❖ HS may be the phoniest environment that exists today.
 - Some students can do well in HS, but not maintain a job after HS.
 - Some students can do poorly in HS, but do well post-HS.
- ❖ Make the HS environment more personal
 - Ask students what they want
 - Different levels of courses that help them to feel more comfortable help them to associate with students that they can identify with...
 - Honors classes are OK, but they exclude some students
- ❖ Make classes more heterogeneous, stop tracking.
- ❖ The people that need us the most are the ones who get less of our attention in the current system.
- ❖ Match teaching style with learning style.
- ❖ Cannot put 30 students in a classroom and expect a high quality of education.
- ❖ Examine the true cost of K-12 education. (“The Manufactured Crisis”, Berliner & research by Gerald Bracey)

- ❖ How do we identify student interests earlier in their school exp., and use that to provide a successful education.
- ❖ What are we preparing students for?
 - “to survive in the world”
 - school prepares us for college
- ❖ What is one good thing in your school and what is one thing you would change? (students)
 - Good – “The way that everyone gets involved”.
“The opportunities that we have”.
 - Good – “Support from out teachers and other students”.
 - Change – “We don’t learn what is needed in the real world”
 - Change – Students in AP classes have all of the opportunities, kids that are new or not in AP don’t have the opportunities.
 -
- ❖ We exaggerate the differences between groups and ignore the difference within them.
- ❖ How can we make HS more meaningful for students?
 - “The more we tell students that they must do something the less students want to do it”
 - Students must feel that they are a part of the building, that they are noticed.
 - Create smaller learning communities within the larger high schools.
 - Get like people together in some way so that they can identify with the HS experience.
 - Differentiate diplomas – different careers, college prep.

- A meaningful diploma based on students interests, what is important to them, what they are best suited to do.
- Teachers, for whom school came easy, are not necessarily the ones who can best teach students who do not find school easy.
- We must change assessment (i.e., tests, multiple choice tests, etc.) Poor assessment is not acceptable.
- Assess and evaluate what students are interested in, what they do best...
- What hurts kids regarding assessment is that it can scare kids, it can take them out of their own ideas about what they think that they want to do.

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Table 25

Key Points in our discussion:

High school should:

- be based on individual needs and goals
 - prepare students to be engaged in current and future learning
 - provide opportunities and skills for students to fully participate in society
 - enhance intellectual, vocational, social and emotional capacity of students
- The key is to get everyone involved at the building level. This is a local thing that we won't be able to dictate.

What should a high school diploma mean?

- Students should have competencies in basic core subjects
- Global perspective and a respect for diversity with an understanding of multiculturalism
- Citizenship (e.g., positive active participant in the culture, knowledge of essential foundational information, critical reasoning skills)
- Ability to work in groups and demonstrate basic social skills
- Communication skills (critical reading, writing, thoughtful listening skills, articulate oral communication)

- Technology (how to apply it and adapt to the changes that it creates)
- The ability to learn, unlearn, and relearn
- An assured level of rigor (the down side to help)
- A maturity level that includes the ability to accept consequences positively and the ability to be an independent person

What needs to be done to make the high school experience more meaningful?

- Assessments need to be meaningful (not just multiple choice tests – include meaningful performance assessments -- include assessments that measure student growth –choices in types of formative assessment)
- There should be an individual plan for each student that includes student outcomes
- Students need choice within a structure that assures essential learning
- We need to think about what we really want students to know – essential understanding (Is writing the footnote important, or can technology help us with pieces of that)

How do we keep students engaged in the high school experience?

- A balance of work experiences (work shouldn't be the whole thing for kids)
- Reinvent the structure of high school so that it returns to the social connections that used to happen in high schools
- Make sure that we give students skills that they really need. We need to catch up with them in

the area of technology and integrate technology into our instruction more creatively

- Break out of the industrial mode of education
- Accept that we as educators don't know everything. We need to create participatory situations in which students do some of the teaching.

What is working in our high schools?

- The senior project (research, design, implement, and present a project to a group of adults)
 - Convey that students aren't finished until they've met the standard (failure is not seen as an option)
 - Involvement of students in the educational process (e.g., help desk in which students will teach the teachers a particular element of technology)
 - Small schools in which students are very involved (even if you're not small, you need to create a sense of smallness)
-
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Table 26

Key Points in our discussion:

- integration, career skills, life skills, culminating demonstration of learning, stop testing fashion trend, stop testing fashion trend
- transfer application of knowledge and skills – valuable, relevant content & opportunities, look at transitions coming in and going out
- student ownership & family involvement, importance of effective classroom teachers, schools
- as a community, adult connection with kids, nurture and hold on tight and grow more master teachers, character development education and training – self responsibility
- effective use of resources, dual enrollment programs – college/university/voctech, technology - distance learning/communication, Take seat time requirement away

Please use the space below to record your table groups comments and discussion.

What should a high school diploma mean?

*excellence – higher education, career.....needs to mean more than a rite of passage

*producing productive members of society

*competencies to prepare students, next step, character

*culminating display of abilities

*basic understanding & application of knowledge.....demonstration of skills.....values/character/participatory citizenship

*beginning rite of passage.....1st step of achievement.....how to be functional citizens. demonstrate what is learned

*demonstrable skills not tied to seat time

High schools today.....

What's working?

- *most things.....college prep.....co-curricularsopportunities for involvement
- *socialization...athletics, drama, band, FCLA, accountability....
- *families become more important again
- *subject area specialists that are able to share with students.....collaboration with higher education, school to work
- *colleges doing well with teacher prep.....students able to take more exciting classes, film, videography
- *working with businesses/competitions/classes outside the school walls.....movement toward high expectations for students.....professional development/in-service...research based practices

What's not working?

- *Interpersonal relations/integrated activities.... life skills.... what are the expectations for character, etc.
- *more interested in me than we.....need to get out of self.....college prep for socialization....manage without mom & dad.....family involvement/latchkey kids....discipline.....colorful language....lack of self discipline in language/interactions...business partnerships.....counseling programs
- *sustainability of business partnerships
- *testing.....wrong way to assess abilities.....
- *compartmentalization
- *high stakes tests
- *return to criterion referenced tests
- *have and have not schools.....communicate value of education....too many tests
- *one size fits all.....

What changes should be made

- *advisory programs
- *remove seat time requirement
- *create school as community.....links occurring in school.....
- *better use of technology.....courses on line.....distance learning
- *explore more opportunities for students.....reduce number of hoops to jump through
- *release time for vocational/ advanced study
- *connect middle schools to high schools....accountability

What do we need to do to engage students

Academically

- * advisor who focuses for full 4 years
- * team concept
- * small learning community
- * use book knowledge for everyday activities
- * master teachers
- *creativity
- *student ownership of being in specific class
- * skills.....personal responsibility

Careers

- *resources to answer questions
- * integration/practicing career skills/opportunities

SUMMARY

*integration, career skills, life skills, culminating demonstration of learning, stop testing fashion trend, stop testing fashion trend

*transfer application of knowledge and skills – valuable, relevant content & opportunities, look at transitions coming in and going out

student ownership & family involvement, importance of effective classroom teachers, schools * as a community, adult connection with kids, nurture and hold on tight and grow more master teachers, character development education and training – self responsibility

* effective use of resources, dual enrollment programs – college/university/voctech, technology - distance learning/communication, Take seat time requirement away

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Table 27

Key Points in our discussion:

- The community must be supportive and encouraging of education. Parents and business partners need to be educated on how to support the students and the process of schooling as it exists today.
- Curriculum and instruction must be exciting, provide a variety of opportunities and be more flexible to meet individual preferences.
- There must be more emphasis on transition to what is beyond high school. Individual student goal setting and planning must occur.
- Knowledge and experiences need to be integrated across the curriculum and need to be application based.
- Standards based assessment and reporting are directing education toward lower levels of Bloom's taxonomy. Analysis and synthesis thinking are more difficult to assess and report.